

A BREACH IN THE REFORMED PRESBYTERY, 1753 ¹

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IN 1749 there was published in Edinburgh a book that was destined to have a considerable influence upon the course of Scottish religious history during the succeeding half century. It had been written by the well-known James Fraser of Brea while he was a prisoner on the Bass during the days of the Persecution. Apparently it had fallen out of observation, for it was not printed till the year named, when it was issued to the public under the title of *A Treatise on Justifying Faith*.² Its doctrine,

¹ The authorities for this paper are mainly in manuscript. The Records of the [orthodox] Reformed Presbytery have been deposited in the New College Library, Edinburgh, for safe keeping. Before 1758 they are fragmentary, and frequently consist of copies of the earlier documents. The Presbytery was formed in 1743 and the minutes of their meetings from that date up to 1753 were carried off by the dissentients and have not since been recovered. The minutes of the orthodox Presbytery begin in 1759 and are continuous thereafter. They were worked over by the Rev. Matthew Hutchison when preparing his *History of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, a book which cannot be implicitly relied on for accuracy. The minutes of 1758-61 contain no reference to the breach. Among the New College Records is a small quarto volume in which are inserted the minutes of the dissentient Presbytery from 1761 to 1816. It is impossible to state definitely whether they are the original minutes or a copy, though the likelihood is that they are the originals. They are the chief authority for sections II, IV and V of this paper.

Section III is an account of a second breach. It is largely taken from the first minute book of St Mark's Unitarian Chapel, Edinburgh, to which by the courtesy of the minister and officials of the congregation the writer was given access. It is a folio volume in which the first minute is dated Broughton, near Edinburgh, January 5, 1792. The minutes are preceded by a general account of the body from 1755, evidently in the handwriting of James Purves, who was then their pastor. The last entry in the volume is dated 1838.

The other authorities are chiefly printed and are named in the footnotes.

² *A Treatise on Justifying Faith. Wherein is opened the Grounds of Believing, or the Sinner's sufficient Warrant to take hold of what is offered in the everlasting Gospel. Together with an Appendix concerning the Extent of Christ's Death, unfolding the dangerous and various pernicious Errors that hath been vented about it. Written by That Eminent and Learned Servant of Jesus Christ, Mr James Fraser of Brae, sometime Minister of the Gospel at Culross, while he was a Prisoner in the Bass for the Testimony of Jesus.* Edinburgh, 1749. The Appendix occupies pp. 159-270. Adam Gib, the

especially its treatment of the extent of the Atonement as set forth in the Appendix, found a ready reception from some. In 1753 the standing of the book was brought specially before the Reformed Presbytery and in the following year before the Associate Synod. The Synod considered its teaching so dangerous that to guard their faithful people against being misled by it, they formally repudiated the book, and in a series of propositions set forth the orthodox doctrine.¹

I

After being without a competent judicatory for many years, the Cameronians were at last able to constitute themselves ecclesiastically. In 1743 they had set up the Reformed Presbytery. When the controversy over Fraser's book broke out, it numbered six ministers—John M'Millan, late of Balmaghie, now in his eighty-fourth year; John M'Millan, his son, ordained in 1750; Alexander Marshall, ordained in 1744; John Cuthbertson, ordained in 1747, who in 1752 had emigrated to America; James Hall, ordained in 1750; and Hugh Innes, ordained in 1751. There is evidence that doctrinal harmony had not prevailed for a time among the brethren, some of the younger men being suspected of laxer views on the subject of the Atonement and on some other matters. There had also apparently grown up a feeling against the veteran John M'Millan, to whom two at least of the Presbytery were not inclined to yield the deference which his age, experience and sufferings seemed to warrant. They referred to him in language which indicated that they considered him overbearing, dictatorial and petulant.

Soon after the publication of Fraser's book, its contents became a matter of serious concern to the Presbytery. To make their own position clear, they, in the year of its appearance, declared their faith in a series of four propositions, and no doubt they considered that thereby danger was avoided within their own borders. Uneasy suspicion, however, remained that everything was not right—a suspicion that seemed to

redoubtable Antiburgher minister of Edinburgh, indicates that there were some suspicious circumstances connected with its publication. The publisher "could not be ignorant," he says, "that there was not one word of the alleged author's handwriting in the copy which he used," and insinuates that Rev. Thomas Mair of Orwell, who was afterwards deposed for accepting the doctrine of the book, had altered the text for his own purposes—*The Present Truth: A Display of the Secession Testimony*, II, 131. There seems no ground for the suggestion.

¹ "Act of the Associate Synod at Edinburgh, April 18, 1754, containing an assertion of some gospel truths in opposition to Arminian errors upon the head of Universal Redemption"—Gib's *The Present Truth*, p. 138, where the controversy is recorded and the whole doctrine examined. Cf. also Walker's *Scottish Theology and Theologians*, pp. 46-50.

increase after certain additions had been made to the ministry. Old John M'Millan, feeble and unable to follow the Presbytery where it met as convenience dictated, kept directing their attention to the matter both by word and by letter, but for one reason or another the issue was always evaded. Pressure at last became so great that it was agreed to dispose of the whole question at a meeting to be held at Brownhill, in the parish of Bothwell, on April 7, 1753.¹

When the Presbytery met, the attendance of members was found to be nine, four ministers and five elders—one minister being absent through ill health. Hugh Innes was called to the chair, and for two whole days Fraser's appendix was under debate. It was examined historically, theologically, and in reference to the peculiar tenets of the Presbytery. Considerable difficulty was found in framing a form of words which would state the issue clearly. After several failures the following was agreed upon :

“Whether Mr Fraser's maintaining, That the Lord Jesus Christ satisfied for the sins of all mankind so that this satisfaction might be competent to be proposed to them in the Gospel, and pleaded by them for their justification ; and that this satisfaction is the ground and formal reason upon which faith is founded, be a dangerous doctrine.”

The result was a majority of two in favour of condemnation, the M'Millans and three elders voting for the affirmative and Hall and two elders for the negative. Being moderator, Innes had no vote, though it was well known that he sided with the minority. On the other hand Marshall, the absent member, would have cast his vote for the affirmative, had he been present. The scene that followed shows how excited were the feelings of the members. The losers exclaimed “in a very strange manner against the Presbytery as if they had been the greatest heretics in the world, crying out that they had razed the very foundations of the Christian faith, overturned the whole Gospel, cut the sinews of their own salvation, might henceforth preach the Law but had not left themselves one word of Gospel to preach.”² An attempt was made to turn

¹ The case was stated historically and doctrinally on both sides, those who favoured Fraser in *The True State of the Difference between the Reformed Presbytery and some brethren who lately deserted them*, 64 pp., Edinburgh, 1753, Price 3d. The M'Millan party replied in *A Serious Examination and Impartial Survey of a Print, designed The True State, etc., by a pretended Presbytery at Edinburgh*, 212 pp., Edinburgh, 1754. The reply was probably drawn up by the younger M'Millan, the elder having died on December 1 preceding, at Broomhill, which was apparently his place of residence. See also *Observations on a Wolf in a Sheep-Skin*, [Charles Umpherson], 1753.

² *A Serious Examination*, p. 29.

the decision into a formal Act of Presbytery but it failed, and adjournment was made till the morrow.

Next day, events took a strange turn. Though the minority had lost their cause, they nevertheless tried to reopen the question, and when the majority resisted, claimed that the vote was null and void, because all the members of the Presbytery had not had an opportunity of expressing their mind, and because the finding contradicted Scripture. They also declared that "the reverend Messrs Hugh Innes, moderator, James Hall, minister, Adam Reid, ruling elder, Mr John Cameron, ruling elder and clerk, *pro tempore*," were "the essential part of this Presbytery." After such a declaration further business seemed impossible for the decisions of majorities were apparently to be ignored. Some confusion immediately arose. The proceedings were interrupted by a blatant petitioner who was present merely as a spectator. He demanded that the majority ministers should be called "to the bar to account for their iniquitous conduct, and in the meantime to suspend them from the present exercise of their office till proper censure be inflicted, and suitable conviction be obtained." To his discredit the moderator appeared to approve of this step, and an attempt was made to sist procedure till next meeting. Young M'Millan left the meeting-place in order to compose his feelings in another room. On returning he found his father and his supporters also about to leave. The minority took immediate advantage of the situation, came to the conclusion that their brethren were deliberately taking themselves off, and adjourned the meeting "to one of the adjacent villages and the moderator concluded with prayer." The majority, however, were of no such mind and declined to be jockeyed by such tactics: they resumed their places and continued the sederunt as the Presbytery.

The breach was complete, and from that time the two parties each went its own way, each claiming to be the true Reformed Presbytery. Before the end of the year the minority issued *The True State* already referred to, its publication being vindicated in an extract minute of a meeting held on August 31—"Whereas the Presbytery, considering the dangerous consequences likely to ensue by the conduct of some brethren who lately separated from their communion, and pretended to erect themselves into a distinct judicatory upon a new and erroneous ground, whereby the people under the Presbytery's inspection are in danger of being ensnared and withdrawn into a stated opposition to several important truths of our holy religion. . . ." Adam Gib's judgment on the tract is not far from the truth. "The historical part of this pamphlet," he says, "afforded strong presumptions that truth could not follow in the doctrinal part. The history being chiefly made up of self-evident and atrocious calumnies, abundantly poured out upon old Mr M'Millan.

And the doctrine which follows, taught with a high degree of sophistical ignorance and presumption, is a general adopting and embellishing of the new scheme contained "in Fraser's book."¹ Before a reply could be prepared John M'Millan died, but his son undertook his defence, and published his *Serious Examination*. The tract is prefaced with an extract minute giving the authority for publication. It speaks of the pamphlet "published by some brethren, who, pretending to assume the whole power of the Reformed Presbytery, deserted the same and pretended to erect themselves anew upon a dangerous footing, subversive of the constitution of the Reformed Presbytery."

Adam Gib is particularly scornful of Hall and his adherents. He speaks of their "new Presbytery, wholly constituted on the ground of universal redemption—and whose absurd constitution is good enough for their cause." Some of his contempt may in part be due to resentment that the action of the minority helped to bring trouble upon his own Church. Their pamphlet, "the doctrinal part of which did run in a very plausible and deceitful strain," could be bought cheaper than Fraser's treatise, and so could be more easily procured by those who were likely to be misled by it. It was only the timely intervention of the Synod that prevented confusion among their own people, "through the corrupting or jumbling of people's judgment by this new delusion."

II

The list of all those who were attached at any time to the dissentients as ministers or students will at this point prove useful.

MINISTERS

HUGH INNES. Ordained 1751. After the breach settled in Calton of Glasgow over dissentients there. Died "suddenly" on Jan. (8?), 1765, aged 38.

JAMES HALL. Ordained 1750. For a time after the breach ministered generally to the adherents of the dissentients. June 1762 settled over the Edinburgh congregation as "their proper pastor." Died December 8, 1781, aged 55. Buried in Greyfriars next the Martyrs' Monument. His large tombstone has the following inscription:

" Blameless in Life, even from his earliest Youth,
 Unknown to wander from the paths of Truth,
 He lived, but did not live on bread alone,
 The Word of Life his Comfort, Heaven his Home,
 His constant aim, The Soul to Christ to Win,
 A friend to sinners, Yet abhorr'd their Sin,

¹ *The Present Truth*, II, 136.

Firm to the Truth, by Sacred influence Mov'd,
Mild yet Severe, Even in Reproof below'd,
This to thine honour, More than this thy due,
On Earth, the Christian's life was shewn in you."

JAMES KIRKALDIE. Licensed at Glasgow though apparently a member of the Edinburgh congregation. What training students were then asked to undergo is doubtful. The minute of his admission reads: "The Presbytery having taken under consideration the necessity of taking under Tryals some proper persons who may be assisting to them in the work of the ministry, and Mr James Kirkaldie being recommended by two members of the presbytery, the said Mr Kirkaldie was called and after conversing with him the presbytery agreed that he should be taken under tryals immediately." Ordained at Kirkcaldy, Sept. 6, 1764. Call to Glasgow refused, Nov. 11, 1771. Apparently became too feeble to carry out full duty at Kirkcaldy sometime at the beginning of next century. Died Jan. 9, 1808.

PETER REIKIE. Licensed in 1751 before the breach. Adhered to the dissentients. Ordained to Ireland, Nov. 14, 1765. Libelled June 1766. Deposed Nov. 5, 1766. Continued for some time to minister to an irregular congregation in Glasgow, then disappeared from knowledge.

ROBERT LOTHIAN. Had been a Methodist and Freemason. In his application for admission said he was now dissatisfied with the Methodists, disapproved of the present Established Church, and was sorry for being a Freemason and "having made some appearance at one of their public processions." Licensed Dec. 11, 1765. Ordained at Glasgow, Sept. 3, 1766. Deserted the congregation, Dec. 12, 1770. Said to have joined the Church of Scotland, but his name does not appear on her roll of ministers.

DAVID ARNOT. A native of Kirkcaldy, licensed April 16, 1778. Appointed unordained assistant to James Hall, Edinburgh, April 1780. Ordained as Hall's colleague and successor, Sept. 27, 1781. Resigned Edinburgh, July 14, 1789. His services divided, Sept. 9, 1789, between Edinburgh and Orwell. Reported on July 31, 1797, that Edinburgh congregation had no place for worship. Minister at Orwell alone. Church built for him at Kinnesswood. Died May 31, 1831, aged 68.

JAMES DUNCAN. Licensed June 27, 1780. Ordained at Denholm, Jan. 22, 1783. Reported to Presbytery, Feb. 20, 1787, that he had left Denholm because congregation unable to support him.

July 18, 1796, difficulties at Denholm, from which he was never formally loosed, still continue. Called to Glasgow, July 24, 1781. Refused, Aug. 26, 1782. Nov. 1809 became minister at Kirkcaldy without formal induction. Apparently retired before 1816.

GEORGE THOMSON. A minister of Burgher Associate Church (see Small's *Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church*, I, 178, 376). Acceded to the Presbytery, April 30, 1783. Inducted to Glasgow, Oct. 1, 1783. Aug. 22, 1791, reported congregation dissolved. Returned to his former denomination and became a member of Greyfriars Secession Church, Glasgow. Died Jan. 18, 1812.

PROBATIONERS

JOHN CAMERON. From a note in the third edition of the orthodox Presbytery's *Act, Declaration, etc.*, 1777, there appears to have been one of this name whom they describe as "a probationer and clerk" and as a "principal member of their pretended presbytery." His name does not occur in the minutes of the reconstituted presbytery, and the M'Millan party were either mistaken as to his standing or he left the dissentients before their disruption. They add that he "professedly deserted all testimony bearing for the reformation principles of the covenanted Church of Scotland."

JOHN ARNOT. Licensed Nov. 9, 1768. Call to Denholm sustained, Aug. 5, 1771. Arnot hesitated to accept. Ordination fixed for Jan. 19, 1774. Died before that date.

JAMES SHAW. A probationer from Ireland. Applied for admission, Aug. 8, 1775. Irish credentials competent, but his admission delayed for "some further information of the state of the process that had been led against him in the Anti-Burgess Associate judicatories of which he had not procured extracts." From which it appears he had been a probationer of that church as well. Licensed Aug. 23, 1775. Called to Glasgow, March 5, 1778. Call dropped Aug. 2, 1779. Never ordained. Conduct at Denholm called in question, and declined the Presbytery, Aug. 21, 1781.

WILLIAM FERGUSON. Described as a student of divinity. Gave in his adhesion, June 13, 1768, and was put under the supervision of James Hall, minister at Edinburgh. Nothing further known.

JOHN PRESTON. Received as a student whose course was partly completed, Aug. 19, 1783. Nothing further known.

III

The actions of the dissentients immediately after the disruption of the Presbytery are obscure. Attempts were indeed made to heal the breach between them and their former friends, and meetings were held to discover some common formula which might unite them again. Hall seemed most favourable to a reconciliation, but no common ground could be found, and all the overtures failed. In their own ranks events did not move smoothly, for elements of dispeace began more or less early to emerge.

On January 6, 1754, Innes preached a sermon, *Bigotry Disclaimed and Unity recommended among all the Members of Christ's Mystical Body*, in which he pleaded for perfect freedom of action in regard to fellowship with Christians of other churches so long as they held by the essentials of the common faith. So wide was his catholicity that he encouraged George Whitefield in his work and prayed for the prosperity of the Erastian Church of Scotland. This attitude was highly offensive to those with whom he worked. "The judicious reader will be surprised to know," he says in a republication of the sermon in 1756, "that my speaking so favourably and charitably concerning ministers in the different protestant reformed churches, was the only particular cavilled at in this sermon, by such as would confine the spirit of the gospel to their own particular sect." The consequence was the breaking off of all ministerial relations between Innes and Hall.

Hall also had his own difficulties. He objected to the system in use among the Cameronians of general ordination to the service of the church and not to some particular congregation—a principle that was tacitly acknowledged when the Presbytery was reconstituted.

More serious was the course pursued by others of their communion, their story presenting the most peculiar features of the whole history of the breach. Having renounced the authority of the M'Millanite party, they in 1755 became dissatisfied with the conduct of their own allies on the ground of "their not preaching so faithfully against the sins of the times as they should have done, and vindicating or allowing such practices as they thought inconsistent with their professed testimony." Some attempt seems to have been made to win them back to their original fellowship, but, after a temporary reconciliation, the effort failed, and in 1761 the orthodox Presbytery declared that they "now audaciously impugn the validity of their [the orthodox Presbytery's] ministerial authority and potestative mission, undervalue the pure ordinances of the gospel dispensed to them, and live as if there were no church of Christ in the land, where they might receive the seals of the

covenant either to themselves or their children.”¹ For a time they submitted “to the pretended authority and ministrations of William Dunnet, a deceiver, destitute of all mission and authority whom they were afterwards obliged to abandon.”²

The chief seat of these double dissenters was in Berwickshire and on the eastern Borders generally, although in later times they had adherents in such places as Dunbar, Dalkeith and Dundee.³ Like other Cameronians, they were grouped into societies and correspondences, and even entered into some kind of understanding with brethren of like mind in the north of Ireland, a minute of agreement being drawn up and signed at Coleraine on November 1, 1763. According to the summary of their history in their minute book, of which the author and scribe is probably James Purves himself, “these societies always kept the ordinances of civil and ecclesiastical government in view as objects they wished to obtain, according to the plan revealed in the Scriptures of truth; and as they considered the Scriptures of the prophets and apostles as the source from whence the true knowledge of these was to be derived, so a free enquiry into these, without the restraints of human creeds and confessions, they considered as the best way to attain the knowledge of what was there revealed. By a free and humble enquiry they came to more and more consistent views of the boundless love of God and the universal mediation of Christ, as the alone and universal administrator of all the Father’s purposes; so that they contended not only for the headship of Christ over the religious concerns of his people, but also for his headship over their civil concerns.”

The main difficulty that oppressed them at first was that of procuring ordinances, especially those of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Being out of fellowship with the rest of Scottish Christianity, they had to look to their own number for the service they required. They accordingly made arrangements at a meeting held on June 8, 1769, at Auchencrow, a village about three miles from Reston, for setting up some kind of ecclesiastical organisation—which they achieved by means of separate societies, correspondences and general meetings—and for electing one who might act as a minister among them. They were not altogether ignorant of what was required from a leader, for “they thought that an acquaintance with the Hebrew and Greek languages would be very useful in order to defend the doctrines they held, should objections be made from the original Scriptures; and also to correct or amend any opinion they held, should it appear from the original Scriptures

¹ *Act, Declaration and Testimony . . . by the Reformed Presbytery*, 1761, p. 173.

² *Ibid.*, 3rd edit., 1777, p. 175.

³ The name of John Whittet is mentioned as the pastor at Dundee, but the society there expired in 1799.

that such correction or amendment was wanted." Three men were chosen as candidates, and on July 27, after a day spent in fasting and prayer, the lot was cast. The choice fell upon James Purves, a man of mature years, who had been born at Blackadder, to the south of Chirnside, in 1734. He was the son of a shepherd and had himself served an apprenticeship to a mill-wright at Duns. Part of the arrangement was that he should be set free from all "secular employment," but circumstances prevented the scheme being fully carried out, although it is said that he attended classes at Glasgow University.¹

Purves exercised a pastoral supervision over the Berwickshire communities for several years. In 1776 certain of his scattered flock removed to Edinburgh, where they formed a society, specially calling themselves "the successors of the Remnant who testified against the corruption of the Revolution Constitution of the Church of Scotland as settled about the year 1689," and speaking of those from whom they had separated as "the various pretenders to Reformation, who are only branches sprung from the same corrupt root," and so identifying themselves most closely with their Cameronian ancestors. They at once set about looking for some one to take charge of their spiritual interests, and their eyes turned naturally towards Purves. He was invited to Edinburgh, and by an agreement, dated November 15, 1776, became their pastor. Apparently there was no form of ordination or induction into office. Nor is mention made of stipend, and it is reported that Purves supported himself by teaching a school. Deprived of the services of Purves, the Berwickshire societies chose Thomas Trench, who was one of the three original candidates, to be their pastor, and he ministered to them till his death in July 1788. In course of time the societies themselves disappeared.

Though Purves was the pastor, he does not appear to have retained all the teaching in his own hands, even when he was translated to Edinburgh: certain chosen members exercised with him the function of leadership and exhortation. After his death, which took place on February 1, 1795, a motion was made to "renounce all human pastors and overseers and proclaim Christ only their pastor and overseer," but the proposal was defeated. In 1797 one of their staunchest supporters "delivered a thundering discourse against all pastors and presidents in, or to be in, any Christian society, anathematising electors and

¹ His name does not occur in the *Matriculation Albums of the University of Glasgow, 1728-1858*, edited by W. Innes Addison, who says: "It is necessary to premise that these Matriculation Albums do not contain a record of all who actually attended the University during the period covered." Purves made a certain name for himself: see the sketch of his career in *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, XLVII, 50. He was a voluminous writer, twenty-one items at least appearing against his name.

acceptor," but nothing came of his oratory. Amid many aberrations in doctrine and practice the Society have never dispensed with the office of the ministry. The general order of service at the end of the century is thus described: "Fore and afternoon the clerk began the service with a short prayer, then read and sung a part of the psalm; to this followed a prayer by one of the brethren, then portions of the Old and New Testaments were read by the clerk, and a part of a psalm sung again; next prayer and a discourse from one of the four [specially chosen] members, then prayer and a discourse from another of these, and the meeting concluded with prayer, praise and a benediction from him who gave the last discourse."

Doctrinally the dissentients did not make much advance till near the end of the century. In 1771 they published *A Short Abstract of their Principles and Designs* which their orthodox brethren severely denounced. "In this," they said, "they cunningly evade the acknowledgement of our Confession of Faith and Catechisms, decline to own the doctrine of the holy Trinity *in unity*, and do professedly adopt and avow the hypothesis of the famous modern Socinian, Dr Taylor of Norwich, anent the person of Christ, according to which he is no more than a 'glorious Being truly created by God before the world.' This pre-existent creature they call a *super-angelic* spirit, the which spirit coming in time to be united to a human body, makes, according to them, the person of Christ, a person neither truly God nor truly man, but a sort of being different from both." In 1792 they thought it necessary to issue another manifesto stating their religious position, and in doing so found some difficulty in discovering a designation for their society. They finally resolved to call themselves "Universalist Dissenters," as best defining their doctrinal and ecclesiastical position: "*Dissenters*," they said, "was a denomination by which they had long been known, and the love of God, the mediation of Christ, and his headship over all persons and all things, was held by them to be *universal* in the highest sense of the word, which few or none of the sects they are acquainted with will admit."

After the death of Purves the people remained without a clerical leader till 1812, when Dr Thomas Southward Smith² was elected their minister. By this time they had moved still nearer the Unitarian position,

¹ *Act, Declaration . . .*, 3rd edit., 1777, p. 175.

² See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, LIII, 135. In 1796 the Society had some communications with George Jamieson, who described himself as "minister and schoolmaster of Rosehearty by Banff," and who desired to join them with an unexpressed purpose probably of becoming their minister. They were not, however, satisfied with his character and reputation, and in a year or two the applicant passed on to London where he attempted to unite himself with the Unitarians. He was not on the roll of the Church of Scotland ministry, and at the date mentioned the United Secession congregation at Rosehearty was not yet congregated.

and declared that their "society recognises as the very foundation of its existence the broadest principles of religious liberty. Whoever believes in the Divine Mission of Jesus Christ, and whose moral conduct is unexceptional, is eligible to become a member." At the same time they indicated the trend of their opinion for they professed the doctrine of Universal Restoration and considered the avowal of "the strict unity of God highly important." The first time the word "Unitarian" occurs in their records is under date March 8, 1813, and thereafter the headlines in their minute book run: "The Unitarian Church of Edinburgh." In the following year they again defined their attitude, laying down "the principle that there is strictly and truly one only God and that his benignity to his creatures is universal," and restricting their reference to the Lord Jesus to the affirmation that "Jesus is the Christ." A further advance was made in 1822 when each person admitted to their fellowship had to declare his belief "that Jesus Christ was sent into the world to communicate a revelation of the will of God to men, with regard to their duty and final destiny: That in pursuance of this object and in attestation of the divine authority with which he was invested by his Father, he wrought miracles, suffered, died, and rose again from the dead, as is related in the holy Scriptures; and that the moral instructions, which he delivered and illustrated by his perfect example, are stamped by the authority of God, his Father, and are therefore of universal obligation."

The creed of the society was further defined in 1835, when each candidate for admission had to declare that "it is my intention to associate with them for the worship of the 'one God, the Father,' to the exclusion of all other persons, beings or subsistences, in obedience to the instructions of our blessed Saviour, whose divine mission I fully recognise as evidenced by his life, death and resurrection, recorded in the New Testament, and whom I regard, not as the Supreme God, but as the 'one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.'"

It was a long distance from the evangelical doctrine of Cameron and Renwick, and of the first John M'Millan, to the extreme position of denial thus taken up by their lineal descendants, but the stages of their route are marked and clear.

The congregation never seems to have been very large in numbers. The first recorded "Resolutions agreed to by the Society of Christians termed Universalists," which they passed in 1812, were signed by only thirty members, being all males and apparently heads of households. In 1822 the congregation numbered forty-nine in all. From 1835 to 1847 the total admitted to membership was 150, the vast majority of whom resided in Edinburgh. For many years they received financial help from the London Unitarian Association. In 1835 they moved into

their new church in Castle Terrace, Edinburgh, which has been known as St Mark's Unitarian Chapel, although some further change is perhaps indicated in a name recently adopted, "St Mark's Church (Free Christian)."¹ Their whole history is unique in Scotland, but recalls the fact that during the eighteenth century many congregations in England, at one time Trinitarian and Presbyterian, became Unitarian and Independent.² There does not seem to have been any connection between the English and Scottish movements, at least during the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth.

IV

How the differences that existed among the leading dissentients in the breach of 1753 were removed is unknown: it has been affirmed that they were reconciled through the influence of outside persons. But at last a reconciliation was effected, and they reconstituted themselves into a Presbytery. The inaugural meeting was held at Falkirk on October 21, 1761, when there were present Hugh Innes and James Hall, ministers, with William Buchanan, Glasgow, and Walter Tough, Edinburgh, elders. Hall was chosen moderator, and Peter Reikie, probationer, acted as clerk.³

The first business was to justify the step that had been taken, and the minute of the meeting accordingly begins with the following declaration. The gathering had taken place, it was said, "according to a former agreement, to consider of the propriety of meeting together in presbytery for the prosecution and carrying on of the Testimony to the Doctrine, Worship and Government of the Reformed Church of Scotland, and against the Defections which had taken place therefrom. After long conference on this very important affair, Agreed that in regard the Differences which formerly obstructed their meeting in a presbyterial capacity have been happily removed a considerable time ago, and that they do not propose to adopt any new principles different from these that have been received and sworn to by the Reformed Church of Scotland and all ranks in the three Kingdoms and which they have formerly avouched, As also that the keys of Government and Discipline belong no less to the officers of the Church than that of Doctrine, and ought

¹ Further information regarding the congregation can be obtained from *A Review of the Missionary Life and Labors of Richard Wright*, written by himself, 1824, and from Coventry's pamphlet, *Historical Account of the Congregation of St Mark's Chapel*, 1908.

² Cf. Drysdale's *History of the Presbyterians in England*, 1889, pp. 534-6, 617-22.

³ In the meetings of both branches of the Presbytery the clerk was seldom a member of the court. He was usually a student in divinity, a probationer, or in some cases a layman.

accordingly to be exercised, Therefore it appears necessary for them to meet in presbytery for this purpose, and they did, and hereby do, resolve immediately to constitute in a presbyterial Capacity in the name of the Lord Jesus, the alone King and Head of the Church." Thereafter they continued to meet as a Presbytery as occasion demanded. Hall was appointed to prepare a statement of the views that kept them in a state of separation from other Presbyterians, but if the document was ever printed no copy has come under observation.

From all that can be gathered from the minutes, harmonious relations between the brethren were maintained throughout. The only disturber of the peace was Peter Reikie, the one probationer the church possessed at the time of the breach. He had been licensed in 1751 and had previously a somewhat variegated career. In 1746 he was a student of philosophy, apparently with a view to the ministry. In April 1748 the Antiburgher Synod recommended the Presbytery of Edinburgh to take him on trial for licence, but something intervened and nothing came of the proposal.¹ He then applied to the Reformed Presbytery, and to the evident dissatisfaction of M'Millan, senior, was received as a probationer. On October 7, 1751, M'Millan complained that they "had admitted a young man upon trials without his knowledge." The ground of his suspicion is stated in the defence of the majority published after the breach. Reikie is there described as "one who had been in connection with those who were notour for that principle of a general redemption" and as "one of whom the greatest part of the Presbytery had no knowledge but by transient report," his case having been brought on "through the influence of a very few." Closer connection with him did not improve opinion concerning him. In the *Testimony*, published ten years later, the orthodox Presbytery specially mentioned him. They testified against "the notorious disingenuity" of Reikie, "who, after a professed dissatisfaction on sundry occasions with the declining steps of said [dissenting] brethren, particularly, with the disclaimer against bigotry, hath overlooked more weighty matters, and embraced a probability of enjoying the long grasp'd for privilege of ordination."² It was a harsh judgment, but Reikie's subsequent conduct seems to warrant the insinuation.

In 1754 Reikie published a little book, *A Letter to a Friend in America*, in which he professed to deal with the disputed theological proposition. He makes a great parade of learning, and quotes freely in his footnotes, excusing his entering on the argument on the ground: "*in publico discrimine omnis homo est miles*, and badger-skins, if brought with a willing mind for tabernacle-building, are accepted." There is a certain blatancy

¹ Small's *Congregations of the U.P. Church*, II, 376.

² *Act, Declaration and Testimony . . . by the Reformed Presbytery*, 1761, p. 172.

about the man. That he had no great doctrinal steadfastness is apparent. In 1764 he was supplying the Relief pulpit at Colinsburgh during the temporary absence of the minister.

The M'Millan party carried with them the great majority of those of a like persuasion with them who resided in Ireland. Frequent communications passed between them and every attempt was made to provide gospel ordinances for the faithful. A small number, however, adhered to the dissentients, and these applied to the minority Presbytery for supply of sermon. Their ministers went over occasionally; and Reikie had also ministered to them as early as the autumn of 1763. They never amounted to more than one or two families and had no regular place of worship.

In September 1765 a call, signed by forty-three persons and twenty-nine concurrents, reached the Presbytery addressed to Reikie. After considerable difficulty Reikie agreed to be ordained over them, and the ceremony was carried through in November 1765 at Edinburgh, because of the inconvenience of transporting the Presbytery across the channel. Reikie, however, had no intention of submitting to the banishment implied in an Irish settlement, and for one reason or another put off proceeding to the island. There can be no doubt that he had his eye upon the Glasgow vacancy, and was toying with the people there with the view to a call from them. The Presbytery, however, resolutely declined to countenance any action that would mean breaking faith with their Irish adherents, and Reikie was pressed to proceed to his charge without further delay.

Tangible hopes were now being held out to Reikie by some of the Glasgow people, and he began to find excuses for repudiating the conditions of his ordination. He asserted that Ireland had never been mentioned at the ceremony and that he had been ordained at large and without reference to any particular congregation, as had been the usual Reformed Presbyterian custom. What perhaps angered his brethren most were his complaints that they had a grudge against him, that they had done their best to prevent his settlement in Scotland, and that they wished to get rid of him altogether. Matters reached a crisis when in June 1766 Reikie was faced with a libel before the Presbytery. He was accused of deserting his Irish charge, of following divisive courses in starting a new cause in Glasgow and by dispensing ordinances there, of taking vows without intending to fulfil them, and of slandering the Presbytery. The case went to trial and witnesses from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and elsewhere were heard. Reikie lodged a defence, but without producing witnesses ultimately declined the authority of the Presbytery. The libel being found proved, he was deposed on November 5, 1766. For a time the Presbytery refrained from taking the final step of cutting

him off entirely from their fellowship, but Reikie did nothing, and the severance became complete. To exonerate himself, he published a statement of his case under the strange title of *A Loud Cry, or Groan of the Oppressed*, and the Presbytery likewise issued their view of the whole controversy.

Whatever may be thought of the Presbytery's method of conducting the prosecution and of the judgment to which they came, there can be no doubt that they got rid of a troublesome and wilful colleague. Reikie seems to have been a man of an irritable and quarrelsome disposition, and readier to foment division than to allay strife. He had conceived a violent dislike to Hall and took every opportunity to vilify him. For at least the next seven years he continued to preach to those in Glasgow who favoured his ministry. After that date he disappears.¹

Despite their rigid principles few cases of discipline ever came before the supreme judicatory. James Crookshanks, a member of the Glasgow congregation, sided with Reikie and gave him some help in the publication of his defence, *The Loud Cry*. In 1769 the man had so far come to a better frame of mind that the Session had again admitted him to privileges, but another member complained of this because the offender "did not acknowledge he was under scandal at all." The case ran over till 1777 when the Session reported that Crookshanks had been assiduously attending public worship for some years and had been "exceptional and useful." In view of this testimony the Presbytery restored him to fellowship.

A very troublesome case was that of Margaret Mowatt of Edinburgh, who was evidently the victim of her own zeal. The Presbytery had drawn out causes of a fast in 1763, which were not complete enough for her eager soul—"several things were omitted which ought to have been inserted." She had evidently spoken somewhat disrespectfully of the Presbytery and the Session censured her for her conduct. Against that sentence she appealed. The case dragged on for many years, until in very weariness of it, it was dropped out of sight.

The only other case came from Denholm. A blind musician appealed against the refusal of the local Session to baptize his child. The judgment of the Presbytery is interesting: "Music alone is not a sufficient employ and that to render it the means of procuring a livelihood it is necessarily connected with the administering to licentious mirth and revelling

¹ *Considerations on Patronage. . . . Likewise a State of the Secession in Scotland in the Year 1773*, by Francis Hutchison, LL.D., Glasgow, 1774 (first published in 1735), p. 25. There seems to have been no connection between the supporters of Reikie and the congregation of Universalists set up in Glasgow a few years later by Neil Douglas, whose career became somewhat notorious. See James Brown's *The Religious Denominations of Glasgow*, I, 107-21, and a biography of Douglas by John Fraser.

Therefore the Presbytery judge it not a lawful business for a Christian upon which he may ask and expect the blessing of God." They accordingly upheld the judgment of the Session.

About 1780 the fact that progress was not being made by the Church seemed to be realised, and as the impossibility of expansion became more evident and the limitation of their resources more pressing, the Presbytery began to cast about for a plan by which they might escape from their difficulties. The only method that seemed feasible was a union with one of the other dissenting denominations in Scotland. Accordingly on June 7, 1784 a resolution was proposed to "adopt some plan to make their principles more fully and universally known that so this way may prove a basis on which to found a coalescence with some party or other."

They ultimately adopted no heroic method to achieve their object. Instead of boldly approaching a church with which union might seem desirable, they two months later came to the jejune determination that "the several ministers should if they had opportunity either converse with some of the ministers of some other partie," or else devise some other plan. Members of three denominations were thus unofficially approached, but nothing came of the conversations. The matter was continued from time to time until at last, on December 27, 1785, the Presbytery resolved that "as no advances have been made by any ministers of other connections for a coalescence it appears unnecessary to say anything more of that matter."

Apparently, however, Arnot and Thomson had not given up the hope of a successful issue to their search, and on September 1, 1788, they reported that they had had some conversations with some ministers of the Associate Synod, then meeting at Glasgow. The movement was somewhat extraordinary as on two vital matters the two churches were fundamentally opposed—the extent of the Atonement and the attitude of the church to the state. The Reformed Presbytery, however, formally sanctioned a conference with the Synod. At its meeting next day the Synod appointed Messrs Belfrage, Fletcher, Shanks, Husband, Peddie, Henry, Burns, and Edmond a committee to confer with their brethren of the Reformed Presbytery. No time was lost in bringing the parties together, but it took little examination to discover that the difficulties were insuperable. On the following day the Associate committee reported, and the Synod "found that there was such difference betwixt them and us that they and we could not walk together in church fellowship to the edification and comfort of one another."¹ The

¹ MS. minutes of the Associate Synod. M'Kerrow refers to this conference in his *History of the Secession*, p. 568, but in such terms as if he understood that the brethren belonged to the M'Millan party.

decision was not communicated to the Reformed Presbytery till July 13 of the following year, when "it was resolved to proceed no further in the matter." It was the last attempt at union, and thenceforth the dissentient Reformed Presbytery went its solitary way to extinction.

As the century drew near its close the ministerial members of the Presbytery emerged out of any delusion they might still have retained as to the possibility of the continuance of their church. Kirkaldie openly expressed his fears, and made what preparations he could for the uncertain future. At the meeting of Presbytery held at Linktown on July 31, 1797, "Mr Kirkaldie expressed his desire, in case of his being obliged in compliance with the divine injunction When ye are persecuted in one city flee to another, that he might be furnished with proper extracts and attestations of his office and character." The Presbytery was at the time reduced to an annual meeting, and next year, on August 6, "Mr Kirkaldie having requested, both as a matter of right and expediency on account of the critical appearances of the times, that he be furnished with proper extracts and attestations of his office and character, The Presbytery accordingly granted the same to him, and also to the rest of the ministers, which extracts were made out and signed by their moderator and clerk in presence of the Presbytery." Was there ever a more pathetic incident, a body of men deliberately signing their own death warrant? There were then but three ministers—Kirkaldie, Arnot and Duncan.

The Presbytery, however, was to go on for some years yet. In 1808 the number of ministers was further reduced by the death of Kirkaldie. At the annual meetings held in 1813, 1814 and 1816 the name of Rev. Alexander Scott appears as one of the sederunt, but there is no indication that he was formally connected with the Presbytery. Scott is described as having been one of Haldane's missionaries, and was irregularly called from Strichen in the north to take charge of the dying Relief congregation at Colinsburgh. Scott and Arnott became fast friends. The two aided one another at communions, and "the tent services at Kinnesswood drew considerable audiences."¹ It is probable that the death of Duncan made the farcical continuance of the Presbytery impossible, and it ceased to meet, the last minute being dated Kinnesswood, August 12, 1816. As is pointed out elsewhere Arnot lived till 1831, and the last of the dissentient Cameronians then passed into the Established Church.

¹ Small's *United Presbyterian Congregations*, II, 379. Dr Small was a native of Kinnesswood and incorporated in his book some interesting details about the dissentient Cameronians, which he no doubt frequently heard spoken about.

V

Altogether the Presbytery had at various times five organised congregations under its inspection—those at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy, Denholm and Orwell. Other places are named, such as Greenock, Dunbar, Cesford and Ireland, but at none of these were services held except very intermittently, if at all. In 1762 Reikie preached at Dunbar. In 1764 a petition “from seven persons in the Correspondence of Cesford for Mr Reikie’s ordination to the ministry without constituting any special relation to any particular congregation” was submitted to the Presbytery. In 1765 Reikie was appointed to preach “in some of the country places belonging to the congregation of Glasgow for two Sabbaths.” In 1779 the moderator of Presbytery reported that he had received a letter from “people of the Presbytery’s concern at Greenock” asking for supply of sermon as they were too far distant from Glasgow. Though this was granted nothing was done towards congregating the adherents there. In fact the people living at all the places named were attached ecclesiastically to one or other of the regular congregations.

The following are notes on the various congregations :

I. EDINBURGH

Many in Edinburgh sided with the stand the dissentients took in 1753, and one of the first pieces of business which the newly constituted Presbytery had to arrange was the settlement of a minister over their adherents in the capital. With the exception of Reikie, whom no congregation seemed to want, the only man available was James Hall. A petition was accordingly tabled by “the congregation of presbyterian dissenters at Edinburgh” that he should be settled over them as “their proper pastor.” Up to that time, however, no Reformed Presbyterian minister has been specially ordained to labour in a fixed locality, and, besides, the people at Kirkcaldy were also anxious to call Hall. The Presbytery escaped from the dilemma by resolving that as Hall had originally been ordained to the members of the church who resided south of the Forth, it would be just that he should be assigned to Edinburgh, which he accordingly was, and took up his office without special ceremonial.

Hall must have been a man of considerable gifts both of preaching and of government. On the whole his ministry in Edinburgh was uneventful, and the affairs of his congregation only once came under the cognisance of the Presbytery. In May 1777 they were called upon to adjudicate on two matters which seem to have disturbed the congrega-

tional peace. Nine persons complained against the Kirk Session for not censuring "some elders who had gone to hear in the Revolution Church on a Lord's Day," and for "suffering some new tunes to be sung." To countenance the Church of Scotland by attending a diet of its worship was a heinous offence, but the Presbytery found that one elder, who had been on a journey and had to sleep at a wayside public-house as the only available lodging, had thought it better to worship somewhere than to be "exposed to improper company upon the Lord's Day." The difference of opinion in regard to the tunes had evidently caused much friction, for an opponent of the innovation had started a rival tune during public worship. The Session defended its judgment in the matter by saying that only one new tune per day was allowed, and that the complainers had increased the difficulty by refusing to learn the new tunes. The Presbytery was enlightened enough to decide that they found no reason for disapproving of the action of the Session.

In 1780 Hall's health began to give way and David Arnot, probationer, was appointed to act as his assistant. On August 21, 1781, Arnot was presented with a call to become Hall's colleague and successor, and the Presbytery sustained the call although a competing one had been tendered from Orwell. Arnot hesitated before accepting, but ultimately acquiesced, and the ordination was carried out on September 27.¹

Hall did not long survive the settlement of his colleague, for he died on December 8, 1781. He was buried in Old Greyfriars Churchyard, and no doubt his affectionate people considered he had well earned the grave alongside of the Martyrs' Monument. Next that memorial, that still draws visitors from all parts of the world, stands the stone erected to his memory.

Arnot's ministry in Edinburgh was not destined to be happy. On July 14, 1789, he represented to the Presbytery that "it was impossible for him to continue . . . from want of a proper supply of the necessaries of life which the people had not the ability to afford him," and he accordingly offered his resignation. The Presbytery allowed his demission to lie on the table, and in the following September a partial solution of the difficulty was discovered. The people at Orwell had no doubt heard of Arnot's action, and asked that his time and services should be equally divided between them and his former congregation. The Edinburgh congregation found it necessary to agree because "their funds were quite inadequate for the support of a fixed gospel ministry."

¹ It would almost seem to have been part of the etiquette of calls for the man called not to accept at once. He usually pleaded for time to think over the serious business, and sometimes his indecision lasted for months or even years. Examples of this uncertainty can be found late in the nineteenth century.

During the next six years this arrangement was continued, and then the Edinburgh congregation, which seems to have been gradually losing its strength, collapsed. On July 31, 1797, Arnot reported to the Presbytery that "the people of our connection at Edinburgh, having no place to meet in for the public worship of God, had given over making application for any more supply." From that date Edinburgh disappears from the minutes of the Presbytery.

Where the congregation worshipped at first has not been ascertained: before the split they probably resorted to the small church at Pentland outside of Edinburgh. In 1781, however, a church was built for them in Lady Lawson's Wynd. That building was sold to a Relief congregation in 1797, who in turn disposed of it to the orthodox Reformed Presbyterian congregation in 1808 for £450. That congregation is now represented in the present United Free Church congregation of Martyrs' and St John's, Edinburgh. It is a curious coincidence that the property of the Glasgow congregation similarly came into the hands of the successors of those from whom they parted in 1753.

2. GLASGOW

The congregation at Glasgow had the most varied experience of all the congregations that grew out of the split of 1753. They must have been in existence in some organised way prior to that date. In 1751 a feu had been taken of a portion of land in Kirk Street (then called High Street), Calton, by James Buchanan, who is described in the charter as a "student of divinity." Evidently the division accelerated the Glasgow movement, for on June 5, 1754, the Rev. Hugh Innes, who calls himself "moderator of the Reformed Session," acquired the site on his own behalf and on that of his session and congregation, and undertook "to erect thereon a commodious Kirk or meeting-house for the worship of God," and the church was duly built. It was "a plain, two-storied brick building," and stood on the bit of ground between the street and the present Calton United Free Church.

Hugh Innes appears to have been a man of some parts, for he left behind him a volume entitled *Meditations and Reasonings on Various Important and Divine Subjects. Together with an Essay for the Revival of Prayer and a Sermon on Psalm cxxii. 3*, Glasgow, 1756. The book is dedicated to Miss Mary Elphinstone, who seems to have been a lady of quality. The dedication is in somewhat inflated terms, the author wishing that she "may crown a high birth, a liberal education, a sprightly genius and an engaging temper with that spiritual devotion which enobles to still more exalted pitch. . . ." The sermon had been previously published in a separate form, and had been attacked by the stricter sort on

account of its alleged liberal views on church fellowship. "Every Christian," he had said, "is under an indispensable obligation to maintain communion with these churches he has access unto, if they have not trampled upon the means of Reformation, nor are constitute upon the ruins of some essentials of Christianity." He had defended himself in a pamphlet, entitled *Charity always consistent with Christianity*. As has already been noted, the question caused tension between himself and those who voted with him against the M'Millans in 1753. The *Meditations* must have had a large circulation, for the list of subscribers named in it totals more than a thousand.

Unfortunately for the congregation Innes died suddenly in January 1765, at the early age of thirty-eight, and from that time to the close the people were seldom free from trouble of some kind. In 1766 they issued a call to Robert Lothian and he was ordained over them on September 3. His ministry did not last long. On December 12, 1770, the Presbytery was informed that "the congregation at Glasgow was become vacant by their minister's deserting them and going into the Revolution Church." It would have been thought that Lothian, having shaken the dust of the Reformed Presbytery off his feet, would have remained silent. But he attempted to justify his conduct. The Presbytery at its meeting on March 7, 1771, however, dealt summarily with him. They declared that he had "joined the Revolution Church without giving any previous reason or so much as apprising the Presbytery of his design or that he had any scruples about continuing in communion with them," and they accordingly did not think it to be "at present for edification to enter upon any further dealings with him."

After Lothian's defection several attempts were made to fill the vacancy, which lasted for the next thirteen years. In 1771 Kirkcaldy of Kirkcaldy was called, but though the call was sustained, the Kirkcaldy people contrived to delay proceedings from month to month until the whole matter was dropped. In 1778 a call was addressed to James Shaw, probationer, who had ministered to them with satisfactory results some time before. The call was accepted and trials were appointed, but Shaw did not present himself for examination. At his trials afterwards, his appearance was not acceptable. Among other things he had blundered about the subject of his controversial discourse, mistaking the question *Quomodo peccatum Adami sit imputatum posteris eius* for *An peccatum Adami sit imputatum posteris*. By this time the congregation had fallen out of love with Shaw, and in the end he declined the call.

In 1781 another attempt was made to secure a minister, the choice falling on James Duncan, who had just been licensed. After long consideration he refused the call in August 1782, giving as his reasons

that "many in the congregation have a particular respect to popularity and others frequently show their aversion to it, and I find I am not able to use such a medium as make them harmoniously to meet," that he "had not sufficient fruit in the ministry among them," and that he "did not feel the influence of the Spirit there as at other places."

Soon afterwards George Thomson acceded to the Presbytery, and the Glasgow congregation at once took steps to secure his services. He was duly called, and so eager were the people for a settlement that they agreed to his induction taking place in Edinburgh, as it did on October 1, 1783.

By this time the condition of the congregation was becoming desperate, and in July 1789 matters reached a crisis. Thomson's stipend was falling into arrears, and it was proposed to sell the church to meet congregational obligations. At first Thomson opposed the proposal on the ground that the people would thereby deprive themselves of a place of worship. In the end the building was handed over to him as his private property, much to the dismay of the Presbytery, who protested in vain. It is apparent that friction had become very acute, for those who would not agree to the transference were "driven" from the congregation. In March 1790 Thomson sold the church to the orthodox Reformed Presbyterian Congregation of Sandyhills and Glasgow for £115, and the people dispersed. The congregation which acquired the building is now Great Hamilton Street United Free Church.¹

3. KIRKCALDY (LINKTOWN)

Kirkcaldy, or Linktown as it is usually called, had a congregational existence before the dissentient Presbytery was reconstituted. Thomas Nairn, who joined M'Millan from the Associate Presbytery in 1743, had been minister at Kirkcaldy and had carried some of his people with him over to the Reformed Presbyterians. Like the rest of the congregations that adhered to the dissentients, they at once departed from the rule of general ordination, and on June 7, 1762, asked Hall to be settled over them. When this plan failed they turned to James Kirkaldie, who had just been licensed, and on September 7, 1763, presented him with a call. Kirkaldie hesitated on account of the state of his health, and it afterwards turned out that he was also influenced by the financial position

¹ Thomson afterwards became an active controversialist. He is given as the "author of some sermons entitled *The Church's Song of Triumph; with Christ's Remarkable Reign*; also *The Confession, Covenant and Secession Testimony Vindicated and Defended, including Letters to Rev. Messrs Fraser, Dick, and Lawson*, Glasgow, 1799; *New and Old Light Principles Compared, a Compendious View of the Connection betwixt Church and State*, Glasgow, 1806."—Scott's *Annals of the Original Secession Church*, p. 471.

of the congregation. To meet the necessities of the case they promised him a monthly collection in addition to the usual stipend, and made a private subscription otherwise, besides agreeing to defray the rent of a house. On September 6, 1764, Kirkaldie was duly ordained. Though called to Glasgow in 1771, he nevertheless remained in his first charge, the people at the time adding "£4 per annum to the temporal support." Kirkaldie continued at Linktown all his life, dying there on January 9, 1808.

In the following year the people petitioned that Duncan of Denholm should be placed over them, but the Presbytery found itself in a curious position which is best explained in the minute of July 16, 1810: "The Rev. James Duncan assumed the ministerial charge of the Dissenting congregation at Linktown at Martinmas last though the Presbytery could not act in that matter in a Presbyterial capacity, there not being a quorum without Mr Duncan, who in that business could not act presbyterially, being his own cause."

By 1816 Duncan had retired from the charge of the congregation, for though he was still a member of the Presbytery and was present at the meeting, a call was presented to David Arnot of Kinnesswood, who refused to consider it "on account of the very disorderly conduct of that congregation in their employing to preach to them a number of vagrant preachers, all of them of different denominations, soon after the above call was given; and also their writing and subscribing another call at their own hand to one of the preachers without the knowledge or concurrence of any member of the Presbytery." Evidently the people were in desperation, for they presented a petition at the same meeting, but the Presbytery refused even to receive it, because "it recognised Mr Buchanan as the fixed minister of that congregation while Mr Buchanan stood in no religious connection with the Presbytery nor had any regular call moderated for him according to the laws of the church."¹ They, however, appointed Duncan to visit the congregation and intimate to them that the Presbytery would "meet in their meeting-house upon Wednesday the 28th of this month of August to make further enquiry into the state of that congregation."

Before that time could come the hopelessness of the position had evidently come home, for the meeting so arranged was never minuted, if it was ever held. The Presbytery at the time consisted of two congregations. If Kirkcaldy proved recalcitrant, Kinnesswood alone remained.

The last notice of the Kirkcaldy congregation occurs in the *New Statistical Account* of 1836: "Till lately there existed a remnant of

¹ The career of this George Buchanan is sketched in Small's *Hist. U.P. Congregations*, I, 205.

that old sect of Christians, the Cameronians, or Mountaineers as they were sometimes termed. The house or rather barn in which they assembled is now occupied by a handful of individuals who call themselves *Christians*; but what their particular tenets are, the writer of this account has not been able to learn. They have no stated pastor, and are irregularly supplied with sermon by itinerant preachers of various descriptions.”¹

4. DENHOLM

The divided state in which the church near the Border was left by the breach has already been indicated. It was not till 1768 that the people in Teviotdale who still adhered to the dissenting Presbytery, took any steps towards securing separate recognition. What supervision they had came to them through their nominal connection with the Edinburgh congregation. In the year named, however, they represented to the Presbytery “the great loss they sustain by the want of gospel ordinances owing to their distance from all the places where there are fixed congregations among us,” and they asked that something should be done for them.

Moderation in a call was out of the question on account of their small numbers, but next year they had an accession of fifteen members from the Established Church. These new adherents had come to see the error of their ways, and testified against such abuses as the encroachments of the civil magistrate shown in the compulsory reading of proclamations and the appointing of diets and causes of fasting without advice from the church; the abandoning of calls in favour of lay patrons; erroneous doctrine and the promiscuous admission to the sacraments. The main offence of the fellowship they had abandoned was “refusing to be reformed.”

Their number was not yet large enough to permit of a hopeful settlement, but at last in 1770 further accessions took place and moderation was granted. John Arnot, probationer, was elected on May 13, 1771, but between dubiety as to his duty and ill-health, his ordination was from time to time postponed until he died, January 22, 1774, before it could be carried out.

It was not till January 22, 1783, that James Duncan was settled over the little congregation. They had suffered from an unsuitable probationer during the long vacancy and Duncan’s ordination was not followed with complete peace. For their minister they had “the most entire love,” but there had been contentions among the members that

¹ IX, 162.

promised actions in the civil courts. Duncan was a man of scholarly attainments. His stipend must have been of slender dimensions, and he had to eke it out by keeping school. It is said that he never had more than six or seven pupils at a time. One of them attained to a measure of fame—John Leyden, the poet and traveller, who remained under Duncan's tuition till he was ready to go to the University in 1790. That Duncan was an excellent teacher is shown by the fact that when Leyden matriculated at Edinburgh, he did not require to take the junior class in Latin.¹

That the struggle to maintain ordinances was great is apparent from the Presbytery's minute of February 20, 1787. Duncan then intimated that he could remain no longer at Denholm because the congregation was unable to maintain him so that he could "enjoy comfort in the discharge of his duties," and especially because he himself suffered from "bodily indisposition." At the same time he informed them that he was now residing in Edinburgh.

With the occasional residence of Duncan at Denholm, the work dragged on till 1796, by which date the Presbytery was at their wits' end to "prevent the dissolution of the relation between the congregation and their minister." The end came soon after, and the last note about the congregation is that the sacrament was observed at Denholm on May 23, 1808. In 1809 Duncan consented to take charge of the congregation at Linktown.

In the old *Statistical Account*, 1796, it is noted that the Cameronian meeting-house was made use of by others, being "attended by several of the inhabitants and neighbourhood, who are two or three miles distant from the [parish] Kirk; few of them, however, join in communion with them."² The congregation was still in existence in 1810,³ but before the next *Statistical Account* was compiled in 1839 it had vanished, the writer noting that "there is a dissenting house or chapel at Denholm, understood to be supported by James Douglas, Esq. of Cavers. It belongs to the denomination of the Independents"—from which it is evident

¹ Some interesting details about Duncan and his school can be learned from the lives of Leyden, prefixed to editions of his poems. Rev. James Morton speaks of "this worthy minister who in more respects than one resembles the clergyman in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*," and says he had a very limited number of pupils, whom he taught Latin and Greek—*Poems*, 1819, p. iv. Thomas Brown calls him a Cameronian minister "whose sagacity and learning in various departments of knowledge were well known in his day"—*Poems*, 1875, p. xiv. Sir Walter Scott passed through Denholm in 1803 with Wordsworth, and called his guest's attention to "the little village schoolhouse to which his friend Leyden had walked six or eight miles every day across the moors 'when a poor barefooted boy.'"—*Lockhart's Life of Scott*, II, 141.

² XVII, 91.

³ Chalmers: *Caledonia*, III, 177.

that the latter body had entered into possession of the Cameronian place of worship.¹

5. ORWELL AND KINNESSWOOD

The district round Loch Leven early became inoculated with the doctrine of Universal Redemption, for it was at Orwell on the north side of the Loch that Thomas Mair, its champion before the Antiburgher Synod, had ministered. The first formal approach of the people in the neighbourhood to the dissentient Reformed Presbytery was made on June 10, 1773, when a petition came from them asking for supply of sermon and "an opportunity of conference with one of the Presbytery as a means of promoting a closer connexion" with them. The petition was evidently very grateful to the Presbytery who at the time were much in need of some such encouragement. What was asked was immediately granted. It is evident that the new cause appeared very hopeful, for supply was arranged for Orwell when it was refused elsewhere. In December a paper of accession by forty-one persons and a concurrent paper by a "considerable number" were received by the Presbytery.

Everything, however, did not work smoothly. No minister was available, and when moderation was at last granted in 1781, proceedings had to be delayed through want of harmony. Whatever chance there was of a settlement disappeared with the delay. The long waiting evidently had its effect for in 1794 it was reported that they had no elders, though next year two of their number were ordained. In 1797 David Arnot, who was now free of his charge at Edinburgh, was sent to supply at Orwell permanently, and certain elders from Linktown were set apart to "assist him till the Presbytery shall see reason to appoint otherwise." Though no formal induction took place Arnot was recognised as minister at Orwell.

For a time the centre of worship was in Milnathort,² but at the beginning of the century a church was built at Kinnesswood, on the eastern shore of Loch Leven, "by one of his leading men," and there Arnot ministered to a small congregation for the rest of his life. He died on May 31, 1831. At his death the remnant, including members of his own family, went over to the Established Church, and thus not only did the congregation vanish but the last evidence of the breach of 1753 also disappeared.

¹ III, 437. The Congregational Church was formed in 1826, and for about ten years was supplied by various preachers until Robert Wilson became pastor in 1835. It is impossible to say whether there was any connection between them and the old Cameronians. The congregation has long been extinct. Ross's *History of Congregational Independency in Scotland*, pp. 244, 247.

² Chalmers: *Caledonia*, VII, 109.

The buildings have now fallen on evil days. The church, which was of no great size, stood on the west side of the main road that runs through the village. It was transformed into a house of two stories, and is now roofed with red tiles. The lower story is given over to domestic purposes, and is filled with many odds and ends. The manse is in the same lane as the house where Michael Bruce, the poet, was born. When David Arnot took possession of it it was already old, for the date 1688 is carved on the lintel over the door. Half of the simple "but and ben" of which it consisted has now disappeared, and the remainder is used as a stable. Everything is eloquent of the meagre lot to which a minister of the dissentient Presbytery must have been doomed.